



County of Loudoun
Department of Fire-Rescue Services
Memorandum

For Additional Information:

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For Immediate Release:

TORNADOES -- KNOW THE FACTS AND PREPARE NOW

A National Weather Survey team has confirmed that the Wednesday, July 9th Storm that moved across Loudoun County produced two tornadoes. Damages from Wednesday's storm that occurred in a path between Round Hill and Lincoln were caused by a tornado (F-1). The storm spawned an additional weak tornado (F-0) near Ashburn Farms.

Tornadoes are one of nature's most violent storms. Recent storms remind us how quickly destructive tornadoes can move through Virginia. Regardless of where you live, all citizens need to learn what to do in case of a tornado. It pays to know how to keep yourself and your family safe.

The Loudoun County Department of Fire-Rescue Services' Office of Emergency Management encourages businesses and families to take time now to learn what to do in the event of a tornado.

When preparing for tornadoes, the most important step is to find safe shelter. The general rule for tornado safety is to "go low and get low". In other words, you should go to the lowest level of the structure that you are in, away from windows; crouch in a low position, protecting your head. This same approach applies even if you are not in a building or cannot get to one. For instance, if you are in a mobile home, a car or outside, try to get to a sturdy building for shelter. If this is impossible, lie flat in a low area with your hands covering the back of your head and neck.

When severe thunderstorms threaten, people should watch the sky and pay close attention to weather advisories. Environmental clues that may indicate an approaching tornado include a dark,

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often greenish sky, large hail and a loud roar similar to a freight train. To alert the public of tornadoes, the National Weather Service issues tornado watches and warnings.

- A tornado WATCH means that weather conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes. If a tornado WATCH is broadcast, stay tuned for further advisories and be prepared to take cover.
- If a tornado WARNING is issued, it means a tornado has actually been sighted. WARNINGS are issued for individual counties and include the tornado's location and its direction and speed. If you are in or near its path, seek shelter immediately. Do not attempt to look for the tornado. Many tornadoes in Virginia are obscured by rain and are not visible at all or are not visible until it is too late.

Knowing simple safety rules and taking immediate action can save your life. The following safety tips are offered by the Virginia Department of Emergency Services, the National Weather Services and the Loudoun County Department of Fire-Rescue Services, Office of Emergency Management:

- The best shelter from a tornado is a basement. If you do not have a basement, go to an inside room without windows on the lowest level of the house (a closet, bathroom or interior hall). Protect your body from flying debris with a heavy blanket or sleeping bag.
- Avoid windows. Opening windows to equalize pressure is ineffective in reducing damage during a tornado. Don't worry about the windows; worry about finding shelter and protecting yourself.
- Mobile homes are extremely unsafe during tornadoes. Seek shelter elsewhere.
- If you are caught in an open building like a shopping mall, gymnasium or civic center, get into the restroom, if possible. In larger buildings, restrooms are usually made of concrete block and will offer more protection.
- If there is no time to go anywhere else, seek shelter right where you are. Try to get up against something that will support or deflect falling debris. Protect your head by covering it with your arms.
- If you are outside when a tornado strikes, try to find shelter immediately in the nearest substantial building. If no buildings are close, take cover by lying down flat in a ditch or depression.
- If you are in your car, get out of your vehicle and try to find shelter. A bridge underpass, a culvert or ditch can all provide shelter if a substantial building is not nearby.
- Know the names of the counties, cities and towns that are near you, especially those to the west and south. You will be better able to track the tornado's direction if you are familiar with the geography of your area.

For further information regarding tornado preparedness or other preparedness activities contact Kevin Johnson with the Loudoun County Office of Emergency Management at 703-777-0333.

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